

RICHFIELD

POLICE DEPARTMENT

June 12, 2020

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Dear Richfield Community Members,

In my 30 years of service to our Richfield community, I can honestly state that these are unprecedented times. On May 25, 2020, amidst a global pandemic, I was shocked and outraged when I saw the video of Mr. Floyd's tragic death. The complete indifference and incompetence displayed by Officer Chauvin was appalling. I am also deeply saddened that the unjust actions of a few will cast dark shadows on a great many. The behavior on display at this scene was not indicative of my profession and the men and women who serve proudly every day. When an officer tarnishes the badge we wear, they must be held accountable.

I have since received numerous telephone calls and emails from residents wondering what policies, procedures, and practices the Richfield Police Department has put in place to ensure this tragic incident doesn't happen in our community. I will attempt to answer some of these questions in this letter.

Hiring of Officers

It all starts with hiring the right people. We can teach people how to perform the tasks as a police officer, but we can not teach the core competencies of character. So In 2014 our department instituted a rigorous hiring process that closely examined our officer candidate's character traits to ensure they would be a good fit for our agency and community. The psychological evaluation designed for our officer candidates was based on the guidelines and recommendations from the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association, and me. Some components of our psychological exam include:

- Minimum psychological and psycho/social qualifications and characteristics for a Richfield police officer.
- Cognitive and emotional "groundedness".
- Preferences for influencing others in different types of situations.

- Assessments that examine preferences in work style, communication, conflict management, organization, flexibility, confidence, diversity, stress management, conflict management, values, beliefs, biases, verbal fluency, problem solving, decision making, work environment/conditions, relationships needed with peers, supervisors, alcohol and drug use, driving violations, learning preferences, community culture, and experiences relevant to Richfield.
- Influences during development years that display in adulthood.
- Behaviors, attributes, and other personal characteristics associated with effective and counterproductive job performance as an officer at the Richfield Police Department.

Candidates that don't meet the City's and/or my expectations in these areas are removed from the hiring process. I am always looking for those who will go the extra mile to serve and make a positive difference in every interaction.

Our hiring philosophy has allowed us to acquire and retain officers of the highest caliber. Our department is more diverse than ever before and we are proud to be one of the most diverse police agencies within Minnesota. In fact, 31% of our officers are female and/or persons of color. The wide variety of officers' backgrounds brings cultural awareness and language skills to the community we serve.

Training and Supervision

Richfield police officers receive extensive training including crisis intervention training (CIT) and de-escalation strategies. All officers receive CIT training upon initial hire and periodic CIT training thereafter. Officers also complete a spectrum of annual training courses related to crisis and conflict management including persuasion, de-escalation, emergency medical holds, mental health, serving those with autism, and implicit bias. The Richfield Police Department's training program greatly exceeds Minnesota's minimum requirements.

Along with proper training, the key to any organization's success lies with its first line supervisors. Like many police departments, our first line supervisors hold the rank of sergeant. The Richfield Police Department has eight sergeants assigned to the patrol division. They are responsible for the day-to-day operation of our patrol operations. Our sergeants are all veteran officers with a vast array of experiences including investigations, task force membership, and special investigations. All of our sergeants follow strict expectations:

- Lead by example in all aspects of police work.
- Hold personnel accountable for their actions.
- Act on the behalf of the city, the police department, and its leaders.
- Train and develop their personnel.
- Develop, maintain, and motivate a cohesive team that works together to accomplish the department's mission and objectives.
- Be knowledgeable of state statute, city ordinances, police policies, and procedures.

Officer Wellness

The Richfield Police Department is committed to officer wellness and officer resiliency. Our department recently hosted in-depth training that included subject matter experts in nutrition, physical fitness, finance, and stress management. We also have a robust chaplain program guided by a local pastor, Brice Eichlersmith. He is instrumental to the success of this program and clearly understands that police officers that are physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically healthy have a greater capacity to perform their jobs and are more effective in their service to the community. Pastor Eichlersmith dramatically improves our officers' wellness through trust-based relationships he has developed with every officer on our department. Third, we partner with the Metro CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management) Team to provide our officers with pre-incident training to build resiliency regarding workplace stress and post-incident briefings to help officers recover from traumatic incidents. The department will continue to make officer wellness a priority.

Community Engagement

The Community Oriented Policing (COP) philosophy has been a part of the Richfield Police Department for many years. In fact, in 2007 the Richfield Police Department became the third police department in Hennepin County to join the Joint Community Police Partnership (JCPP) program in an effort to enhance our COP philosophy. JCPP is a Hennepin County program designed to build trust in the community by enhancing communication and understanding between law enforcement and multicultural residents of Richfield.

In addition to the JCPP program, the Richfield Police Department looked to the May 2015 report, *President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* to bolster our community policing efforts. This report identified best policing practices and offered recommendations on how those practices could promote effective crime reduction while building public trust. The Richfield Police Department subsequently adopted several of the report's recommendations including, but not limited to the following:

- Action Item 4.2.1: "Law enforcement agencies should evaluate officers on their efforts to engage members of the community and the partnerships they build. Making this part of the performance evaluation process places an increased value on developing partnerships."
- Action Item 4.2.2: "Law enforcement agencies should evaluate their patrol deployment practices to allow sufficient time for patrol officers to participate in problem solving and community engagement activities."

Our department implemented these action items, and several others, into our police policies in 2017. Officers were required to participate in 24 hours of annual community engagement activities and were empowered to be problem-solvers and develop their own programs, especially relating to youth in our community. We have consistently performed over 1,700 hours each year to community policing aside from our regular duties. More importantly, an officer's COP activity is an essential component of their annual performance evaluation. Our department also annually recognizes an officer that excels in their commitment to COP with our *COP Officer of the Year Award*.

All Richfield officers understand that community engagement is the foundation of good policing and is an essential job function.

Policies and Procedures

Our policies and procedures are reviewed on a continual basis and changed or updated as needed. A full policy review and redistribution is completed every two years. This is done to keep current with any updated changes in Legislative laws or guidelines from the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Board. Our policies are considered best practices in the State of Minnesota.

Steps Taken to Reduce Deadly Force Encounters

The Richfield Police Department regularly examines its policies to ensure we are compliant with various regulations, laws, legal precedent, and best practices, especially those concerning use of force. A campaign called *8 Can't Wait* (8cantwait.org) identified eight practices that can lead to 72% fewer police killings. The Richfield Police Department already meets and/or exceeds these practices:

- Our department is committed to resolving conflicts through the use of communication skills, crisis intervention and de-escalation tactics, when feasible.
- Use of force instruction does **not** include choke holds and/or neck restraints. These techniques have never been taught or used at our department.
- Policy requires officers to intercede to prevent the use of unreasonable force and requires officers to report instances of inappropriate force.
- Policy also requires officers to report any violations of constitutionally-protected rights.
- Policy prohibits officers from shooting at a moving vehicle (with limited exceptions).
- Department members are prohibited from using force based on bias against a person's race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic.
- Force used as punishment or retaliation is prohibited.
- Policy requires that police officers use the **minimum** force that is reasonably necessary to effectively bring an incident under control.
- Policy states a verbal warning should precede the use of deadly force, where feasible.
- Policy requires a report each time an officer uses force or threatens to use force.

The Richfield Police Department is the only department in the State of Minnesota to contract with an independent vendor, Police Strategies LLC, to perform additional, in-depth analysis of our use of force incidents. This innovative program allows our department to identify trends in our use of force incidents and serves as an early intervention system to ensure officers are using appropriate levels of force and only when necessary.

The Richfield Police Department is committed to treating all members of our community with equity. Policy requires that our officers carry out their duties with integrity, fairness and impartiality. Our department also recently launched a procedural justice campaign, "*Police Like a Champion*." The campaign encourages our officers to adhere to four pillars of procedural justice: **engage** in proactive

interactions with citizens, **relate** to our community through authentic connections, **listen** to our community's voices, and **explain** processes, actions, and options.

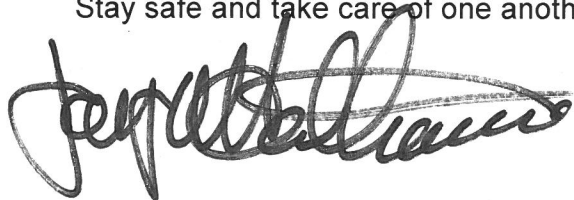
In February 2020 the State of Minnesota Working Group on Police-Involved Deadly Force Encounters released 28 recommendations and 33 actions steps that, if implemented, will reduce deadly force encounters with law enforcement in Minnesota. The Richfield Police Department is actively reviewing this report as part of our five year strategic plan to determine if there are policies, procedures, or practices that can be adopted from this report.

The Richfield Police Department plans on implementing body-worn cameras for all of its officers in the near future. Our department has completed all of the legal requirements necessary for such a program and is in the final steps of acquiring the necessary finances. It should be noted all patrol vehicles are already equipped with advanced video camera systems.

Our Commitment to You

Richfield police officers are honored to serve our community with courage, integrity, and hard work. We are listening to your concerns and always forge ahead on ways we can improve. I hope our commitment to excellence earns your support and trust.

Stay safe and take care of one another,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Henthorne", written over a horizontal line.

Jay Henthorne
Chief of Police